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AYRES' HAWK EAGLE *HIERAAETUS DUBIUS* IN ETHIOPIA AND SOMALIA Throughout its range in Africa Ayres' Hawk Eagle is regarded generally as a rare bird. Undoubtedly its scarcity, or apparent scarcity, is partly due to difficulties in field identification. *Hieraaetus dubius* is one of a group of small eagles, which in some species are mainly brownish in some stage of their plumage sequence, and requiring, in our present state of knowledge, great care and experience in their identification in the field. Recently, as notable advances have been made in establishing diagnostic recognition characteristics, some of these species are being identified much more frequently, resulting in a better understanding of their distribution and abundance. However, much remains to be discovered, particularly with regard to birds in intermediate, and often indeterminate, plumages, and for most observers (including myself) there will still be a rather large proportion of unidentified birds. The situation is complicated further because some species are dimorphic in having both dark and light forms, and others show much variability within any one plumage phase.

Species from which *H. dubius* has to be distinguished in Ethiopia and Somalia, assuming that the observer has narrowed down the identification to this 'group of four', are immature and dark phase Booted Eagles *H. pennatus*, sub-adult African Hawk Eagles *H. spilogaster*, and Wahlberg's Eagles *Aquila wahlbergi*. I have critically reviewed my own notes resulting from observations on smaller eagles throughout Ethiopia in the years 1969-1977, and exchanged a valuable correspondence on the subject of their identification with the late Dr Leslie Brown. As a result, a record of *H. dubius* has been discarded, and as this affects the distribution map in Snow (1978) it is listed here, together with all other records which are definitely assigned to *H. dubius*, in both Ethiopia and Somalia.

One plumage character given for *H. dubius* by Brown & Amadon (1968) led to both my misidentification of one *H. pennatus* as the aforementioned *H. dubius*, and also to my inability to identify other birds which are now recognizable as *H. pennatus*. From these authors' description of the field characters of *H. dubius* I assumed earlier that any eagle of the 'group of four' with white shoulder patches had to be this species. Later I came to realize in Somalia, where *H. pennatus* is common, that quite a large proportion of this species also possessed white shoulders. On acquiring a copy of Porter et al. (1978) this point was confirmed, so that white shoulder patches on a bird within the 'group of four' could no longer be regarded as a monospecific diagnostic character. Nevertheless, its presence was still of value in eliminating *A. wahlbergi* and immature *H. spilogaster* from consideration. The white shoulder patches, although small, are visible from above or head-on for a considerable distance in bright light.

ETHIOPIA

Urban & Brown (1971) summarize the situation of *H. dubius* in Ethiopia, as being uncommon to rare in the South-East Highlands, West Ethiopia and South Ethiopia, and possibly in the Rift Valley, but its range is uncertain; it is

said to occur at 300-3200 m in a variety of woodland, including lowland riverine *Ficus/Acacia*, lowland subtropical humid forest, Olive/*Podocarpus*/Juniper forest, Juniper/*Podocarpus* woodland, and probably combretaceous woodland. I have traced two published records from Ethiopia, and have five subsequent records of my own:

1. Burca (9°16'N, 41°17'E), in the South-East Highlands (Moltoni & Ruscone 1942).
2. Godare (7°18'N, 34°58'E), in West Ethiopia, one on 10 February 1969 (Brown & Urban 1970).
3. 7 km east of Jimma (7°40'N, 36°50'E), in the West Highlands, one on 11 January 1972. A dark bird with conspicuous white shoulder patches, pale throat, darker blobs on dark underparts, three or four bands on tail.
4. 21 km east of Ambo (8°59'N, 37°52'E), in the Western Highlands, on 10 June 1975. A pale bird with conspicuous white shoulder patches, barred tail, primaries and secondaries.
5. Bulcha Forest (6°25'N, 38°11'E), in the Rift Valley, two on 7 December 1976. Two similar dark birds together, feeding on a White-bellied Go-away Bird *Corythaixoides leucogaster*, of which only one had white shoulder patches; remiges and tails boldly barred below.

Two other birds, one at Gambela (8°15'N, 34°35'E) in West Ethiopia on 24 July 1971, and another at Koka (8°27'N, 39°06'E) in the Rift Valley on 23 January 1977, were almost certainly this species.

The record of mine in Snow (1978) at Aseita (11°33'N, 41°26'E) should be deleted as I have now clearly identified it as *H. pennatus*.

SOMALIA

Ayres' Hawk Eagles are apparently confined to a restricted area of riverine forest along the Juba River in southern Somalia, whence there are three records, of which the first two have been published:

1. Hanole (c. 0°25'N, 42°43'E), 1 July 1901 (Erlanger 1904, Hilgert 1908, Zedlitz 1914-1916, Moltoni 1936, Snow 1978).
2. Serenli (2°26'N, 42°17'E), January 1923 (van Someren 1929, Moltoni 1936, Snow 1978).
3. Gelib (= Jilib) (0°29'N, 42°46'E), a sub-adult on 23 February 1980 (JSA and J.E. Miskell). A pale bird with barred tail, secondaries and inner primaries from below; white underparts, streaked on breast and spotted on flanks.

Ayres' Hawk Eagle is at present only known as a rare bird in Ethiopia, where the seven records are scattered over a wide area of the western and southern parts of the country south of 10°N and west of 41°E. The three records from Somalia are from the Juba River. The respective distribution maps' squares are, Ethiopia: 58B, 69A, 81B, 97C, 109A; Somalia: 60C, 71D.

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SOME OBSERVATIONS ON THE BAT HAWK *MACHEIRAMPHUS ALCINUS* I have watched a Bat Hawk in Langata, Nairobi between 7 and 24 November 1980; some of the more noteworthy observations are given below:

7 November: I saw the Bat Hawk flying both in the morning and afternoon. The bird resembled a large falcon; it made fast circles about 10 m above the ground. The appearance, flight-style, irregular dull brown markings of the underside and its large size led me to think at first that it was a Saker Falcon *Falco cherrug*. However, the lack of barring on the tail and wing distinguished it as a Bat Hawk.

10 November: the Bat Hawk was flying round at about 60 m when it was attacked by a Lanner Falcon *Falco biarmicus*. The Lanner was evidently disturbed, as it was 'hecking' loudly when it closed in. The Bat Hawk was flying at a slower rate yet easily avoided the Lanner's half-hearted stoops. After the Lanner had left, the Bat Hawk landed on a tree and I was able to confirm the original identification.

16 November: at 17:00 hrs, in bright daylight during a break in a storm, I saw it leave its favorite tree, fly around, and reappear with a bird (probably a swift *Apus* sp.) in its foot. It was being chased by a Hobby Falcon *subbuteo*, but, before landing, the Bat Hawk swallowed the prey.

17 November: during heavy rain a dark phase Eleonora's Falcon *Falco eleonora* was occupying the Bat Hawk's habitual perch; on the approach of the Bat Hawk the falcon flew away.

18 November: again, during heavy rain, the Bat Hawk was seen to chase a Steppe Buzzard *Buteo buteo vulpinus* but took no notice of 20-30 Eastern Red-footed Falcons *Falco amurensis* which were hawking termites overhead. Three days later it chased a Black Kite *Milvus migrans* and attempted to strike it.

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